

TRI-STATE TRANSPORTATION CAMPAIGN



Testimony of Ryan Lynch, senior planner and Connecticut coordinator
Tri-State Transportation Campaign
Joint Committee on Transportation

February 14, 2011

My name is Ryan Lynch, and I am the senior planner and Connecticut coordinator for the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, a non-profit organization working for a more balanced transportation network in Connecticut, downstate New York and New Jersey.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

I am here today in support of Proposed Senate Bill 720, *AN ACT CREATING PENALTIES FOR CAUSING HARM TO, OR THE DEATH OF, A VULNERABLE USER OF A PUBLIC WAY*. This bill has been endorsed by Connecticut's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board, among many other advocacy groups, and would identify vulnerable users of the State's public ways, users that include pedestrians, highway workers, cyclists, a person driving or riding an animal, a person using a skateboard, roller skates or inline skates, or a person operating or riding on an agricultural tractor or farm implement.

The legislation, as currently written, would create penalties for a person convicted of inflicting serious physical injury or death to a vulnerable user. These offenders will be required to attend a motor vehicle operator's retraining program, perform community service and be eligible for a fine that would not exceed \$5,000.

While the penalties outlined in the current legislation are less stringent than those outlined in other enacted vulnerable user legislation, the measure is a good step towards driver accountability. The legislation will importantly increase awareness among drivers regarding other users of the State's roadway infrastructure and will also encourage drivers to view driving as a privilege to be taken seriously.

There is, however, an area where the bill can and should be strengthened.

Any definition of vulnerable users should also identify first responders including, but not limited to, police officers, state troopers, firefighters and EMT's. In 2008 alone, the most recent data available from ConnDOT, almost 50 accidents occurred that involved people directing traffic, working in the road and emergency personnel. These first responders put their lives on the line every day and should be protected under this legislation more explicitly.